

ELIMINATING WASTEFUL FEDERAL SPENDING

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House Approves Measure to Eliminate Improper Payments from Federal Agency Spending and Recover Lost Funds

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Last week, the U.S. House of Representatives approved the Improper Payments Elimination and Recovery Act with my strong support, and the measure will soon be signed into law. The legislation is designed to identify and eliminate improper payments from federal agency spending and recover the lost funds that agencies have misspent.

Improper payments occur when a federal agency pays too much, pays twice or pays for the wrong product or service. The improper payments may occur as a result of fraud or from poor financial management systems that do not detect or prevent mistakes before federal dollars are misspent. According to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), in 2009, federal agencies spent a total of \$98 billion in improper payments. That amount is more than double the entire budget for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Federal agencies can and should do much more to identify and prevent such wasteful spending. The legislation approved by the House with my strong support will require agencies to develop and report on action plans to avoid future wasteful spending. It also lowers the threshold for reporting improper payments, requires agencies to recover overpayments and requires that agencies hold top managers accountable for their progress in addressing improper payment problems.

In addition to reducing government waste, it is time to address federal spending by returning our nation to balanced budgeting. We currently face the largest federal budget deficits in its history. In the 1990s, we were able to achieve federal budget surpluses. It is time to return to the fiscally responsible policies of that era and impose fiscal discipline on federal government spending. A balanced federal budget can and must be achieved.

Toward that end, I am a cosponsor of the Securing America's Future Economy (SAFE) Commission Act, a bipartisan measure which would force Congress to make the hard choices needed to balance the federal budget.

The bill will create a national bipartisan panel to examine all areas of federal spending and revenue policies and make broad based and comprehensive recommendations to Congress for reform. The measure then requires that Congress take up the Commission's recommendations expeditiously and approve or reject them as a whole. No amendments or negotiations would be in order. Neither house of Congress could change the recommendations nor delay their consideration, and the bill requires Congress to give priority to the consideration of the recommendations over other congressional business.

The SAFE Commission Act enjoys broad bipartisan support, and it is cosponsored by more than 100 Democrats and Republicans who all agree that it is time to change the nation's financial course. The SAFE Act will take a first necessary step toward achieving this goal, and I look forward to working with my colleagues to ensure its enactment.

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